United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1281
2 December 1992

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ As Security Council continues consultations on Somalia, Secretary-General studies relationship between UNOSOM and "new force that Council may authorize" to secure humanitarian operation; General Assembly appropriates over $109 million for UNOSOM from 1 May 1992 through end of April 1993; follow-up meeting to 100-Day Action Programme scheduled in Addis Ababa from 2 to 4 December.

+ United Nations spokesman describes as "extraordinarily serious" situation in Cambodia where in two days United Nations personnel have been victims of four separate incidents arising from conflict there.

+ Afghanistan, with world's largest group of refugees now returning home, faces "emergency of immense proportions", Secretary-General warns in report; appeals to international community to provide necessary funds.

+ Concerns, rights and needs of disabled persons should be addressed at every level, Secretary-General says in message on occasion of International Day of Disabled Persons, to be observed at Headquarters tomorrow.

+ Secretary-General to convene meeting of high-level personalities in Geneva on 28 December to consider ways to advance implementation of United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

+ Agreement to speed up phase-out of ozone-depleting chemicals reached by parties to 1987 Montreal Treaty.

+ Over $48 million dollars pledged today to the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for 1993.

+ Fort-fifth volume of United Nations Yearbook published, marking first time in 30 years that it is published within 12 months following calendar year covered.

* * *

(more)

For information media--not an official record

As the Security Council is continuing its consultations on the situation in Somalia, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is studying the relationship between the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and the "new force that the Council may authorize to create a secure environment for delivery of humanitarian assistance" in that country.

A statement issued by a United Nations spokesman said that until the precise nature of the force was determined and the Council had taken a decision, the Secretary-General had requested the Canadian Government to hold temporarily the deployment of its troops to Bossasso.

In a related development, the General Assembly yesterday decided to appropriate over $109 million to finance UNOSOM for the period from 1 May 1992 through end of April next year. It also authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the operation, at a rate not to exceed $14 million gross per month, for the period beginning 1 May 1993, should the Council decide to continue the operation beyond that date.

The Assembly further asked the Secretary-General to set up a special account for UNOSOM and to secure that all United Nations activities related to the Operation are administered under the authority of his Special Representative.

In other news, a meeting is scheduled in Addis Ababa from 2 to 4 December as follow-up to the Coordination Meeting on Humanitarian Assistance for Somalia held mid-October in Geneva, which launched the 100-Day Action Programme for aid to that country. It will be chaired by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ismat T. Kittani, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson.

It is hoped that the Addis Ababa meeting will go beyond the scope of the 100-Day Action Programme to address relief and rehabilitation activities for the first half of 1993. Another objective is to bring together all the different parties, including a number of Somali political leaders, clan leaders, local non-governmental organizations and Governments, and United Nations organizations.

* * *

A United Nations Spokesman today described as "extraordinarily serious" the situation in Cambodia where in the past two days personnel with the United Nations Transition Authority (UNTAC) have been the victims of four separate incidents arising from the conflict there.

Yesterday, six United Nations military observers - three British, two Filippinos and one New Zealander - were kidnapped by forces of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK). The Spokesman, Joe Sills, said that efforts were being made to secure their release, but with no success so far. However, radio contact had been established and the kidnapped personnel reported to be in good health.

(more)

A United Nations team travelling by helicopter to Phnom Penh to speak to NADK representatives about the incident, was hit by gunfire, Mr. Sills continued, and a senior French officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thierry Mone, was struck by a bullet. He was operated on and was now in "good condition".

In separate incidents, this morning (Cambodian time), a civilian police vehicle driven by two Tunisian members of the United Nations police force, hit by an anti-tank landmine. Both policemen were injured, the one quite seriously. Two hours later, a second civilian police vehicle hit a landmine, injuring all four passengers. One of them was hurt seriously and was evacuated to Bangkok for treatment.

* * *

Afghanistan, with the world's largest group of refugees now in the process of returning home, is facing an emergency of immense proportions, the Secretary-General warns in a report issued today. He says that unless the international community provides the minimum necessary funds, there will be little chance of overcoming the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan in the foreseeable future. He describes as "a remarkable phenomenon" the fact that the Afghan refugees are willing to go back voluntarily despite the very difficult and dangerous conditions they face on their return to the country.

Apart from the financial crisis facing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) repatriation programme, Mr. Boutros-Ghali says, the lack of funds has held back crucial clearing of mines, and no new funds have been available for sectors such as agriculture, health care and road rebuilding. Deploring the poor response to his consolidated appeal in June for aid for Afghanistan, he stresses that assistance is needed not just for refugees, but also for the population as a whole, for basic survival.

The Secretary-General appeals to all Governments concerned to support a political process in Afghanistan that would promote national unity, safeguard the country's territorial integrity and respect the right of the Afghan people to decide their own future. Any actions to the contrary, he warns, will have serious political and security implications for the whole region.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in a message issued on the occasion of the first International Day of Disabled Persons tomorrow, 3 December, has said that an integrated approach to disability has been one of the most welcome developments over the last 10 years. The concerns, rights and needs of disabled persons should be addressed not only every day of the year, but also in every sector and at every level.

He went on to say that the United Nations of the future would be people-centred, based on a new partnership between the United Nations and its agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations.

(more)

To mark the observance of the Day tomorrow, a demonstration of technical aids for people with disabilities will be held at United Nations Headquarters. It is being organized by the Center for Computing and Disability of the University at Albany, State University of New York. The demonstration, in the General Assembly Public Lobby, will show how computers and other advanced technologies can enable people with disabilities to overcome barriers which prevent them from taking an active part in society.

On 14 October, at its special plenary sessions to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), the General Assembly had proclaimed 3 December as the International Day of Disabled Persons. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, a blueprint for action in the areas of disability prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities, was adopted by the General Assembly on 3 December 1982.

* * *

As part of his ongoing effort to address the critical economic situation in Africa, the Secretary-General will be convening a meeting of high-level personalities in Geneva on 28 December. The participants will advise him on ways to advance the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, a programme of commitments by Africa and the international community to foster the continent's economic recovery and development.

Those attending include: Sylvie Brunel, President of "Action Internationale Contre la Faim"; Bronson Dede, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Organization of African Unity; Martin Huslid, Norway's Permanent Representative to the United Nations; Edward Jaycox, Vice-President, African Region, of the World Bank; Simba Makoni, Executive Secretary of the Southern Africa Development Community, and Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and Chairman of the Africa Leadership Forum.

United Nations officials participating in the meeting include: Layachi Yaker, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission of Africa; Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, and Yves Berthelot, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

* * *

Ministers and high Government officials from 74 countries and the European Community agreed earlier this week to a complete phase-out of ozone depleting CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) and carbon tetrachloride by 1 January 1996, four years ahead of schedule. They also decided to speed up the elimination of halons (used in fire extinguishers) by six years, from 2000 to 1994 and the 100 per cent phase-out of methyl chloroform (used in dry-cleaning) by nine years, from 2005 to 1996.

(more)

The agreements were reached at the end of a three-day conference of parties to the 1987 Montreal Treaty organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director of UNEP, said they represented "the strongest package of global environmental laws ever enacted", but that that was not enough. In 1992 scientific observations by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and UNEP had demonstrated that the ozone layer had experienced its greatest deterioration. "We cannot rest until the ozone layer is safe", said Mr. Tolba.

Two other significant agreements were reached at the conference. One called for an accelerated phase-out of HCFCs (hydrofluorocarbons). The other called for a freeze, by 1995, of production of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant on soils, on foodstuffs stored in warehouses and in buildings, at the 1991 level.

* * *

Over $48 million dollars were pledged today for the 1993 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides educational services, food aid, medical services, relief and social services programmes.

Announcement of contributions were made by 34 countries, as well as the Holy Sea, at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA.

Some of the Agency's traditionally largest contributors, such as the United States, the European Community, Sweden, Japan and the United Kingdom, said their pledges would be announced later.

The UNRWA's regular budget for 1993 announced last year totalled $317 million. However, it was feared that there might be a shortfall of $20 million in its cash resources for next year as a result of diminishing financial support for its programme of Extraordinary Measures for Lebanon.

* * *

The Department of Public Information has announced the publication of the forty-fifth volume of the Yearbook of the United Nations, covering the activities of the United Nations system in 1991. This is the most current edition and marks the first time in 30 years that the Yearbook has been published within 12 months following the calendar year covered.

Fully indexed, the Yearbook is the single most comprehensive and authoritative publication covering the work of the Organization. It is designed not just for use by diplomats, government officials and scholars, but also by writers, journalists, teachers and students. Information is given on meetings and activities of United Nations bodies, and major resolutions are reprinted in their entirety.

* *** *